A

SERMON

ON

MINISTERIAL SUPPORT.

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The following discourse was prepared in the ordinary course of my duties, without the remotest intention of publishing it. It was written not by way of complaint against the people of my charge; but to correct some false views, which exist to a greater or less extent in all communities, on the subject discussed; and it is only by the repeated request of several who heard it, that I now consent to its publication.

SERMON.

LUKE x. 7.

FOR THE LABORER IS WORTHY OF HIS HIRE.

THESE words form a part of the charge which Christ gave to the seventy, when he sent them forth to preach, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." It is substantially the same as what he had given to the twelve disciples on a similar occasion. As they had left their accustomed avocations for the sake of preaching the gospel, the question might very naturally arise in their minds, how they were to be supported? The Saviour anticipated this, and to quiet their anxiety, said, "The laborer is worthy of his hire."

The subject presented by these words, as you readily perceive, is ministerial support. And unless I am altogether mistaken, this is a subject upon which there exists some very erroneous views—views which are *unjust* and *unscriptural*. There are those in every community, in most of our religious societies, and even in the church, who talk about *hireling* preachers, and speak tauntingly of a *salaried* ministry; just as though a stipulated salary had some other meaning than an adequate support, or some return for benefits received. This, I am aware, is not a very general feeling, yet it exists, and for the good of religion as well as for the sake of the ministry, which God himself has appointed, it ought to be corrected.

The Christian ministry is entitled to a competent and liberal support. This is the proposition which I design now to discuss.

I. A proper regard for *justice* gives them an undeniable claim to this. Such is our decision in reference to men in every other department of life. We do not send for a physician—we do not employ men to sail our ships, or till our soil—we do not appoint men to go to the State Legislature, or to Congress, without rendering to them a suitable compensation for their services. We ought not, it would be unjust. If they faithfully devote themselves to the business, whatever it be, to which we call them, they earn what we pay them. And we, as individuals, or as a community, receive a full equivalent. But are not the labors of ministers as beneficial to their societies, and to their country, as those of any other class of men? Who, I would ask, do as much for the suppression of vice, and for promoting habits of industry, sobriety and temperance, as ministers? Just select a village in our land where they have never been blessed with a Christian ministry—if such a village can be found—or if you please, take a village where for many years they have been without a minister, and let one be settled there; how soon you will see the beneficial influence of his labors, upon the habits and upon the intellectual and moral character of the people. Not long since, I was riding through a village, in this State, in company with a shrewd, clear-headed merchant; and on entering it he said he felt himself unable to account for the change which had taken place there during the past ten or twelve years. Its business had recently been no better than in former years; and yet it had been constantly improving in its appearance; most of the houses were now painted, every thing around was neat, and indicated a thriving and prosperous condition of the people; while a village which

we had passed, whose business was the same, had been continually growing poorer, and every thing about it bore evident marks of decay. I pointed him to a neat house of worship on a piece of rising ground just before us. Sir, said I, they have had, for some fifteen years past, the preached gospel here; which, for more than a quarter of a century, they have not had in the village we have left behind. He needed no other explanation; knowing the history of the two villages, he readily acknowledged that there was no other way by which the difference could be accounted for. Here and there such a case may be found even in New England; clearly showing that the tendency of the Christian ministry is to produce in a community feelings of self-respect, promote habits of industry and increase the value of property. And I ask why it is that the temporal condition of this Republic is superior to that of the republics of South America? They have a better soil, a better climate, and they also have the written gospel. To what else but that we have an intelligent, pious ministry, which they have not? "Like priest, like people." Had our Pilgrim Fathers brought to these icy rock bound shores a time serving, money making, pleasure loving priesthood, what reason is there to suppose that our condition would have been better than that of the republics to which I have alluded.

The influence of the Christian ministry also gives an efficacy to law, and a security to property and to life, which nothing else gives. A few years ago, a gentleman who owned a large tract of land, very sparsely settled, in a neighboring State, tried every means in his power to prevent those in the vicinity from stealing off the timber. Other means proving altogether ineffectual, he then applied to a friend to procure for him a Christian minister. Although he himself was a man of very liberal sentiments, yet on this occasion he wished to obtain the services of a

minister of the real old Puritan stamp, who would preach the gospel in all its power and pungency. He would cheerfully pay his salary, merely for the security it would give to his property. Our land speculators at the West, in mapping out their towns, never fail to leave an eligible building spot for a church; well knowing that they shall be amply remunerated by the additional value which it will give to their property around it. The time has been, when neither life nor property could be safely exposed in the Islands of the Pacific Ocean. There is scarcely a group of them, with which is not connected the sad tale of the massacre of a sailor, or of a ship's crew and officers. But during the past thirty or forty years the character of the inhabitants of those islands has changed. Christian missionaries have been there, and wherever they have labored, (embracing all Eastern Polynesia, scarcely excepting the Marquesas group,) our ships may enter and find life and property as safe as they are in New England. "Thus many a Christian missionary is, in effect, an American Consul of the most unexpensive and efficient kind; and his congregation a society for the protection of American lives and property." Banish to-day every minister of the gospel from this land, and in a few years what would our laws be but so many dead letters in the statute book, worth scarcely more than the paper on which they are written? What would be the security in the value of all that we possess? Those who are living for this world only, and think not of an hereafter, never receive so much from any source to which they contribute so little, as what they receive from the labors of the Christian ministry.

But the influence of their labors is felt more especially in things of a spiritual nature. This is their principal business; every thing else is only secondary or incidental to this. In sickness you expect the minister to visit you, believing that the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous

man, availeth much. When death enters your habitation, you wish him to come and sympathise with you, administer consolation, and supplicate for grace to sustain you under your trials. And what would be your feelings in the dark hour of affliction, when deprived of a beloved friend, or laid yourself upon a bed of sickness, if there were no man of God to enter your dwelling, to take you by the hand and direct your eye to the Saviour? Are you a Christian? Call to mind then the blessings which you receive from the preached gospel. How often, on the Sabbath day, has some precious truth, accompanied by the living voice of the preacher, come like a messenger of mercy to your troubled bosom—dispelled the dark cloud which hung over you—strengthened your faith and brought you nigh the verge of heaven. Have you not been ready to say with the Psalmist, "As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped, until I went into the sanctuary of God." How often in the house of God have you received spiritual blessings in connection with the preached word, worth an hundred fold more than you ever gave of your temporal things to support it. And how often, as you have gone to the weekly lecture, or to the meeting for prayer, wearied with the cares of the world, and burdened with a sense of sin, has your burden fell, your soul been quickened in duty, and your return to your fire-side been made cheerful and happy. The Bible itself is of great value, but I ask is it not made far more so by the labor, and the living voice of the Christian ministry? Our Lord Jesus Christ knew well the value of the ministry; he therefore commanded his church to send forth to the nations of the world, not the *written* but the *preached* gospel. But for the labors of the ministry, who of this, or of any church, would not now, in all human probability, have been like others around them, wandering in nature's darkness and strangers to all their cheering hopes of future glory? Let the

churches of this Commonwealth be without the Christian ministry for some ten or twenty years, and what would be their spiritual condition? If with all the labor bestowed upon them in preaching, visiting and prayer, many, notwithstanding, become cold, worldly minded, and manifest little or no spirituality; what would be the effect if no one devoted to the work should labor among them? What would be the temporal condition of the people? What would be the value of property, the efficacy of law, or the virtue of the body politic? You may better imagine than I can describe.

In the discussion of this subject, we ought not to forget the expenditures made by the minister to qualify him for his office. Usually he must devote from eight to ten years to hard laborious study, and in the mean time expend some fifteen hundred or two thousand dollars in money. The interest of this sum, and of what he might have earned during the period of preparatory study, is all given in, amounting to more, ordinarily, than what several of his parishioners together pay for his support. In addition to this, the minister gives all his time after he is settled, to the duties of his profession, not taking a day to earn a dollar in any other way. The very hours he devotes to exercise are to recruit his vigor of body and mind, that he may labor more efficiently in his vocation. And for the time and money he occasionally expends on a journey, his people receive a full equivalent, in his greater elasticity of mind and his more extensive knowledge of men and things. A few weeks spent in this way, in the course of the year, is not a loss but an actual gain to his people. And that class of society, who from personal experience know the value of this part of a man's education, fully appreciate its benefits in the minister. The whole of his time, the results of this capital and all the energies of his mind, be they more or less, he devotes to the people of his charge. And unless I am altogether

deceived, the ministry, as a body, in point of natural and acquired abilities, would not suffer, compared with any other class of men. Far the larger portion of them would, had they been so disposed, stood well as merchants, physicians, lawyers, or in almost any other department of life. That I may not be considered as unduly prejudiced in favor of the talent of my own profession, I will give you the views of a distinguished statesman of this Commonwealth. Mr. Webster says, "I hope that our learned men have done something for the honor of our literature abroad. I hope that the courts of justice and members of the bar of this country have done something to elevate the character of the profession of the law. I hope that the discussions above (in Congress) have done something to meliorate the condition of the human race, to secure and extend the great charter of human rights, and to strengthen and advance the great principles of human liberty. But I contend that no literary efforts, no adjudications, no constitutional discussions, nothing that has been done or said in favor of the great interest of universal man, has done this country more credit, at home and abroad, than the establishment of our body of clergymen, their support by voluntary contributions, and the general excellence of their character, their piety and learning."

And in view of all the invaluable blessings resulting from their labors, are not ministers of religion entitled to a support, a *competent* and *liberal* support? Are there any who would answer in the negative? Some few I have reason to believe there are, in every community. They need not proclaim their views in language; they carry the marks about with them, in such legible characters as make it obvious to every observer that, but for the restraints imposed upon them by those who sustain the gospel, they would be in name, as they are in reality, *heathen*. But I feel assured that there is not an individual connected with this church or society, who does not

cheerfully respond to the language of the text, "The laborer is worthy of his hire." There are those in this, and more or less, I believe, in all our churches and societies, who are kind, generous and liberal. The feeling of their heart is, that their minister should not merely be supported, but so liberally supported as never to be perplexed by any undue worldly embarrassment. This is all I claim for the ministry. And I feel well assured that those, generally, who enter the sacred office, do it not for gold, for fame, nor for ease. Had they no higher motive, there is many a man now in it, who would to-day leave it. For it is not vain presumption in them to feel that they could obtain in other departments of life, something more than a mere support. What profession, or what kind of business is there which demands more of piety, and more of talent, than that which brings a man Sabbath after Sabbath, and year after year, before the same people, whom he must not only instruct, but interest, and not only command their respect, but secure and continue to hold fast their affections? The man who thinks this to be an easy task, is the last man who would be successful if he should undertake it. Worldly motives are not the motives which induce the man of God to enter the ministry. A feeling, higher and purer than any thing of this kind, moves and sustains him in his labors. And the hour is coming, when the sneering, cavilling skeptic, as well as the humble Christian, shall know that when the minister assumes the responsibility of his office, and casts his eye forward to the trials which lie in his path, his motive is love—love to man and love to the church of God—yes, the language of his heart is,

I love thy kingdom, Lord,
The house of thine abode,
The church our blest Redeemer sav'd,
With his own precious blood.

If e'er my heart forget
Her welfare, or her wo,

Let every joy this heart forsake,
And every grief o'erflow.

For her my tears shall fall;
For her my prayers ascend;
To her my cares and toils be giv'n,
Till toils and cares shall end.

Governed by such motives, how many there are, who, having had flattering worldly prospects and were in the way to wealth and honor, freely resigned all and entered the ministry with the absolute certainty that they should toil and labor through life, and receive only what would be sufficient to sustain them from day to day.*

My hearers, you will bear me witness, that I do not ask that ministers should become rich by means of their salaries. God forbid. It would be one of the greatest curses which was ever inflicted upon the church. And if there be any who feel the slightest alarm from this source,

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* Since writing this discourse I have received a sermon, published a few years since, by Rev. Mr. Braman of Danvers, Massachusetts. On this subject he uses the following just language. "There are none of any profession or employment, who, on the whole, receive so little according to the expenses incurred, and services rendered. In both the other professions, law and medicine, the same talent and attainment and service command a third or fourth more than in this. Indeed the disproportion in some cases is greater than this. Let two young men of the first rate talents, pass with the same diligence and success all the preparatory training, and then let them commence life in Boston, the one a physician, and the other a preacher, and both go into full employment, and where the latter would receive twenty-five hundred, it would be nothing different from what has happened, if the former should enjoy an income of six or eight thousand. There are some distinguished men, now situated in large cities, receiving from two to three thousand a year, who, if they had been lawyers or physicians, would be receiving three or four times that amount. The same proportion does not hold in relation to all the members of these professions. But it is generally the case that where a lawyer receives fifteen hundred or two thousand, a clergyman of the same standing as to talent will obtain not more than from ten to twelve hundred. There are men of business talent in the ministry, whose income now just meets their expenditures, who if they had been merchants or manufacturers, would be making, with the same industry and exertions, their thousands a year. When did a minister ever become rich by preaching?

to such I would say, rest assured that your fears are entirely groundless. The most of those in the ministry, with whom I have any acquaintance, have laid up nothing, absolutely nothing by means of their salaries. Most of them, should they die to-morrow, would leave behind them widows and fatherless children, in a cold, selfish world, with not a house to cover them nor a dollar to help them. When the minister thinks of the hour of his death, and it would be singular if he did not often do this, and then with painful anxiety reflects upon the condition of his widow and poor fatherless children, his trust, his only trust, is in God. And this surely is placing the minister of the gospel in quite as dependant a condition as the most callous of his hearers can reasonably require; and demanding of him as much faith at least, as any of those whom he addresses are ordinarily called upon to exercise. And in view of this, where is the man so iron hearted, who, in addition to such temporal prospects as the minister has for his family, would crush his spirits, and cripple his energies, by doling out to him such a meagre support, as nothing but dire necessity would impel him to accept. Are there any such? May God forgive them the sin of thus requiting those who are willing to be poor to preach to them the gospel; and the sin of thus requiting him, who, though rich became poor that we might have the gospel.

II. The claims of the ministry to a competent and liberal support, is clearly taught in the word of God. The ministry of religion was not invented by man. It is the ordinance of God. At an early period in the history of his people, he set apart a particular class of them exclusively for the performance of religious duties. And in the division which was to be made of the land of Canaan, they, as a class or tribe, were to have no inheritance. But he provided for their maintenance by requiring the

other tribes to give them a tenth part of the fruits of their labor. If this at any time was withheld, God complained that he himself was robbed, and sent blasting and mildew upon their land as the consequence. I do not adduce this as evidence that God now requires men to give a tenth of their income for the support of the ministry, nor for any other religious purpose. In the gospel he requires us to give not a tenth, but to give ourselves, and to hold all that we have in trust for him and his cause, and he has assured us that the day is coming, when we shall give an account of our stewardship. But from what he has said under the Old Testament dispensation, respecting the maintenance of the priests and levites, nothing can be more certain than that he designs that ministers of religion should be liberally supported, or as Paul expresses it, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

The New Testament is very explicit on this subject. When Christ sent forth his disciples, he said to them, "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves, for the workman is worthy of his meat." And how was it with the Saviour himself? As he came not to be ministered unto but to minister, we should naturally have supposed that he would not receive, but rather give. But no; although he had the power of working miracles, and by a word could so multiply a few loaves and fishes, as to supply the wants of thousands, yet we have no evidence that he in this way ever provided for his own wants. On the contrary he depended entirely for his support upon those among whom he labored. But it may be said that Paul did not always receive a competent support from those to whom he preached. In a few instances he did not. "I robbed," he says, "other churches, receiving *wages of them to do you service.*" Yes, he occasionally labored with his own hands. But why did

he do this? "To cut off," as he says, "occasion from those who desired occasion." And in speaking of this to the church at Corinth, he says, "Forgive me this wrong." He seemed to consider it a kind of wrong, that he had not given them even an opportunity to pay for what they had received. I know not how the people at Corinth felt on this subject; but there are those, I doubt not, in some of our churches, who would not deem it an unpardonable offence for the minister to give them all his time, and exhaust his energies for their good, and at the same time obtain his support, or a part of it at least, from some other source. Let those who talk about hireling priests, receiving wages, remember that Paul received wages, and that the great Head of the church taught his disciples to feel and to preach that *the laborer is worthy of his hire.* But it is not my purpose to descant upon ill minded men who neither love nor revere the gospel, especially of heathen, of whom the communities where the apostle labored, were principally composed. The simple inquiry is, what does the word of inspiration declare to be right in reference to ministerial support? We have it in the following language: "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care of oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt this is written; that he that plougheth, should plough in hope; and he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" This language is plain, and with all who consider a "thus saith the Lord," authority, it is sufficient.

I shall close this subject with a few remarks.

1. If the Bible and simple justice entitle the ministry of the gospel to a competent and liberal support, then what men pay their minister should never be regarded as charity. But are there not those who do regard it thus? As an illustration of the fact, when they are called upon to contribute to some cause of Christian benevolence, they bring forward at once the amount they have paid their minister, and forgetting or else entirely undervaluing the benefits received, they call this charity, and seem to feel a good degree of self-complacency that they have already done so much in the cause. And when brought into such circumstances as render it proper to make some retrenchments in their expenditures, where do they begin? The bills of the merchant, the physician, the tailor and the mechanic, aye, the bills of their luxuries, and even of their imaginary wants, are all regarded as bills of justice, but the amount contributed to their minister stands *first* on the list of their *charities*, and of course is the first to be stricken off. But is this right? The minister studies and labors, he devotes all his time to the good of his people; and are the results of all his labors of no benefit to them? Why then ever pay him anything? Why ever enter the house of God to hear his preached word? Why send for him when you are sick, or why call him to come and pray when you bury your dead? Every pious, intelligent man will readily admit that a community might better, far better, dispense with the labors of any other class of men than those of the Christian ministry. The benefits resulting from their labors are as much more important than those of any other class of men, as the soul is more important than the body, and eternity than time. Why then should any one regard what he pays for the support of the preached gospel charity, any more than he regards that charity which he pays the school teacher, the lawyer, the congress man, the day laborer, or

any other man who gives a full equivalent for what he receives? Turn the tables, and suppose that you had expended the same amount of time and money that the minister has to prepare yourself to be a mechanic, a merchant, a physician, a lawyer, or for any other business, would you be willing then to give all this and your whole time merely for a competent support, and leave nothing for your family when you come to lie down and die? Or, if willing to do this, ought that which you receive merely for a competent support, be regarded as *charity?* No, never, and he who suffered and died for man, has left it on record, "The laborer is *worthy* of his hire."

2. If ministers are entitled to a competent and liberal support, their people, as honest men, are under obligations to furnish it. How any church and society can, by their own request, be availing themselves year after year of the benefits of a minister's education and of the amount of capital expended in procuring it, and all his time, energies and strength, and yet not give him a support, yes, a liberal support, is more than I can understand. And if any man will tell me how this can be reconciled with simple justice, I will thank him, and shall feel under obligations to him for doing what I have not the ability of doing.

Every man who attends upon the preached gospel should remember, that he is under obligations to do his part in contributing towards its support, and not, as is too frequently the case, share in all its blessings and then let it devolve upon the few to furnish the means and do all the labor which is necessary to sustain it. In any other case this would be considered dishonest, and what better name does it deserve in this? Christians love to hear their minister from Sabbath to Sabbath speak of the rich blessings of the gospel, and freely acknowledge that to it they are indebted for all their dearest hopes, both for time and eternity; and while they are looking forward to the solemn hour of death, and to those peaceful mansions

which Christ has prepared for them that love him, and are expecting there to be clothed in white, have harps of gold, and wear crowns of glory; how often we see them giving less to those who are wearing out their lives in preaching to them this gospel, than men of the world cheerfully give, who are in no better circumstances than they. And are there not those who give reluctantly every dollar they do give? Such men are a standing reproach to the church, and a living contradiction to all their holy professions. They can find money for needless indulgence in dress, equipage, pleasure—money to invest in stocks—but nothing or next to nothing for supporting and extending the gospel. Men will give to the object they love, and what they love above all things else they will cheerfully and liberally sustain.

But there are cases where ministers by inheritance, or in some other way, have property of their own. In such cases there are those, unreasonable as it is, who employ this as an argument why the minister should not expect a full support from his people. The fact then that he has property should be not for his benefit, but for the benefit of his people—absolving them, partially so at least, from the obligation of being just. The minister sometimes, and more frequently than otherwise, is so unfortunate as to have the reputation of this without the reality. But suppose a minister has property, is this a reason why his people should not pay him what he faithfully earns—his due? Would it be a good reason to withhold from the physician, the merchant, or any other man, the payment of his bills, because he has property of his own, or because his wealthy friends will help him? the mere utterance of the sentiment carries its confutation with it. But I ask on what principle of justice can an intelligent, honest man, say this? In the name of their Master, whose commission the minister bears, and who has said, "The laborer is worthy of his hire," I ask, is this Christian, is it

right?* Unless for very special reasons, such as absolute poverty, or as is the case with the heathen, an entire ignorance of the value of the gospel among the people to whom I was ministering, I should feel that whatever might be my own resources, I was doing them a wrong not to receive from them a support. The common maxim, what costs nothing is regarded as of little value, is as applicable in this case as in any other. But further, why should he decline receiving his support from those for whom he labors? If it were that his people might have more to give in acts of benevolence, I would honor his motive, but I should feel that he erred in judgment; for in most cases what he thus relinquishes, would by them be foolishly expended in other things, or what is still worse, hoarded up to enervate the minds, dissipate the habits, and feed the passions of their heirs, when they themselves are dead. Point out to me the church or the people, who pay nothing or next to nothing for the support of their minister, who are distinguished for their benevolence. How can it be—what, a church generous, who refuses to be just! I know of none—if such an one exists, it is a rare case. The reverse is the rule. Those churches who liberally support the preached gospel among themselves, are in proportion to their means, the benevolent churches of this Commonwealth. I could here name ministers, who, having inherited property abundantly sufficient for their support, yet receive their salaries and put them entire into the treasury of God; and thus with the money, which, so far as the interests of religion are

* But it is said, that ministers should be willing to make sacrifices for the sake of Christ. Yes, they ought to be *willing* to make sacrifices. And unless I am altogether mistaken, the most of them do this—and no doubt many of us should make more than we do. But does God require this of ministers only? Where do we read, "Ministers must love the Lord their God with all their hearts, &c., they must deny themselves, &c., but private Christians are to regulate their lives by a different law?" Where do we find this? Point out the chapter and verse.

concerned, would be lost, they are now supplying the wants of the destitute, and sending the gospel to those who would be perishing for the bread of life. It is a very rare thing to find a Christian minister upon whom you can fix the mark of covetousness. Could the secret history of the funds of our benevolent institutions be read, I believe it would be seen, that ministers, as a class, do more in proportion to their means to augment those treasures, than any other class of men. And how many ministers there are, who, while they contribute their mite of the pittance they receive to the benevolent societies of the day, have not the means of ever attending the anniversaries of those societies. And for year after year they have not the means of visiting even their nearest family connections, who happen to live a few score miles distant; if they do, they must practice great self-denial, and perhaps fast a month afterwards in consequence. Is this the kind reward which the man, who is wearing out his life for his people, deserves?

3. A proper regard for the principle of simple justice and the plain teachings of the Bible on this subject would prevent many evils, both to ministers and people. One evil resulting from an incompetent support of the minister is, it limits the field of his information, starves his mind, dwarfs its energies, and thus in the end reacts upon the people themselves. Whatever knowledge a minister may have upon other subjects, and it ought not to be limited, his people take it for granted that he is a scribe well instructed in the things of the kingdom. If he is not, he will not be likely to be a very successful teacher—for here surely the priest's lips should keep knowledge. The Bible is his text book, and with this he should be familiar. But this is not all, which, as a religious teacher, it is necessary for him to be acquainted with. To be useful in these times he must know something of the movements of our different benevolent societies, which, like the living beings

that suddenly peopled the valley of Ezekiel's vision, have come into existence in our own day. To obtain this knowledge he must have papers, periodicals, reviews and various missionary publications. He must know what is doing not only in our own country, but something also of the condition of other countries, their government, religion, character and wants. He must also be prepared to defend the faith once delivered to the saints. For even in this land of Bibles, Sabbaths and sanctuary privileges, we meet with infidelity, not often openly avowing its real name, but in a less manly and more dangerous form, professedly believing the Christian religion, and yet calling in question its great and fundamental truths, proposing doubts and difficulties, chronological, geological, rationalogical and whatever else the skepticism of the human heart can invent against the Bible. These difficulties, many of which have been often fairly met and set aside, men of ordinary reading are not always able to answer. They are pleased to hear their minister answer them, especially if he does it satisfactorily. But this he cannot do by inspiration. It requires a knowledge of facts, and to obtain them it is frequently necessary to consult many books. He must *read* as well as study. And if he would be rich in thought, bringing things new as well as old out of his treasury, he must commune more or less with the thoughts of other minds. The minister would gladly do this, he would, in obedience to the apostolic injunction, give attendance to reading, meditate upon these things, and give himself wholly to them, that his proficiency may appear to all. But if he has not an adequate support how can he do it? As for reading, he has not the books to read, nor the means to obtain them. And this is not all, for instead of giving his whole and undivided attention to the great business of his profession, he can give only a part, and even then his thoughts are often distracted in devising ways and means of meeting his necessary

expenses. He must live; and it is expected of him that he will be given to hospitality, and that he will be benevolent, and it should be remembered, that from the nature of his profession, he is exposed to nameless expenses unknown to most of his people. It may be said he should live within his means; true, but his means should not be so limited as to compel him to incur the charge of being miserly in his mode of living; he ought not, he must not be penurious. Scarcely any thing appears more hateful in a Christian, especially in a minister, than to see him resorting to manœuvres and stratagems which other men would despise, merely to avoid a little expense. His people should place a higher value upon his time and think more of his character, than to impose upon him the necessity of doing this. The minister ought to practice what he preaches. The poor are around him, and often he meets with cases where the claims of humanity call upon him to give—he wishes to give—he feels that he must give, but his poverty absolutely forbids. And when the different objects of Christian charity are presented to him, and he gives nothing or next to nothing, and suffers perhaps a want in doing this; "there," the world cries, "there is the man who talks about liberality, preaches up benevolence to the poor, and pleads so earnestly for the means of sending the gospel to the heathen." They see this and they talk about it, but they forget the deliberate and systematized wrongs which he has suffered, that, while he has been giving his time and devoting all his energies both of body and mind to the good of his people, he has received such a parsimonious compensation for his labor, as makes him rather an object himself of charity, than the dispenser of charity to others. Is it not to be feared that there are those in some of our churches, who in this thing are incurring the woes denounced upon "those that oppress the hireling in his wages." It is also expected of the minister that he will be a pattern of

honesty and of promptness in paying his bills. But he has nothing laid up, nothing on which he can depend but the good faith and punctuality of his people. The time comes and goes, but his expectations are disappointed, he receives not his due. By and by, seated in his study, preparing a sermon for his people, the door bell rings. He more than mistrusts what it means. "Is Rev. Mr.—— at home?" He sees his creditor, but an empty purse closes his hands and almost his lips too. He hopes he shall be able to pay the bill next week. Next week the bill is again promptly presented, but it is again presented to an empty treasury. Now who that is blessed, I had almost said cursed, on such occasions with sensibility, would not be disturbed and troubled? With what feelings does he now reënter his study and then open his Bible and read, "Owe no man any thing," *at least not beyond the time it is due.* Such treatment certainly has no tendency to increase a minister's affections for his people, nor to assist him in his preparations for the pulpit. This being often repeated, the minister, grieved, disheartened, and, perhaps, in embarrassed circumstances, feels compelled to ask a dismission. All this may in some few cases be the result of absolute poverty among his people. But in ninety-nine cases out of an hundred, a proper attention for what God has said upon the subject, yes, even a decent regard for simple justice, and a corresponding effort, would have prevented the whole evil. Men acting in masses about temporal matters, I know, are very apt to throw off responsibility. Of multitudes, it is said, they never blush—and of worldly corporations, they have no souls. But never let this be said of churches, each member of which is expecting ere long to be judged, not only for what he has done, but for what he has neglected to do. In what Christ says of the transactions of that day, sins of omission only are spoken off. The sentence is, "*Inasmuch as ye did it not.*"

No church will ever do much for the cause of Christian benevolence, nor ought they to expect to prosper, till they are just—till they have made such a provision for the support of their minister, as will permit him to attend to his work, free from needless care and anxiety about his maintenance. This is what many a minister does not receive. Facts might be given where ministers have devoted the best years of their life to the good of a church and society; spent what patrimony they had when they went among them; and then, pennyless, perhaps embarrassed with debt and with a family, they have been compelled to leave. Think of the condition of such men, what must be their anxiety and trials. These are not often proclaimed to the world. But they are all known and will be remembered by Him who reigns in heaven. Be they what they may, the man of God feels as did one of old, "Wo is me if I preach not the gospel." They will all soon end—and his crown will be the brighter for the wrongs he has endured for the sake of preaching the everlasting gospel to his fellow men.